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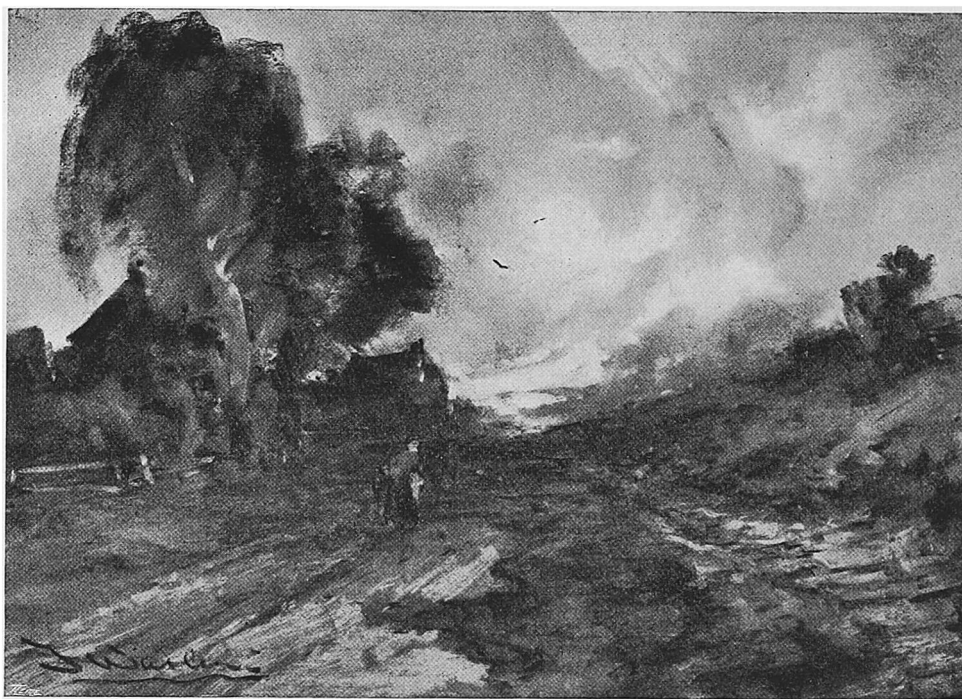
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AT GLAISDALE
BY FRANK WASLEY

FRANK WASLEY'S CHARCOAL DRAWINGS BY FRANK EMANUEL

It is somewhat surprising that charcoal is used to so small an extent as a means for conveying an artist's thoughts to paper, for charcoal has more varied virtues than any other of the mediums which lie at the hand of the worker in black and white. It has almost entirely been relegated to serve in a menial capacity merely as a short-lived forerunner of some superimposed chalk drawing or oil painting, although it frequently happens that the lost charcoal 'knock in' far surpasses in artistry any of the succeeding stages of the work.

Charcoal, rightly used, is the very handmaiden of spontaneity, rapidity, and vigour. With no other medium can a full-toned effect be so rapidly produced, or such a complete scale of colour be rendered, for charcoal yields with equal facility the faintest, most silvery greys, and the most velvety and sonorous blacks. It is the most willing and pliable of mediums;

a touch of the finger and an offending black stroke will vanish without more ado, while a pellet of bread will cause a gleaming light to shine forth out of the midst of the gloomiest of shadows. Perhaps the same qualities of the burnt vine twig, which afford this valuable pliability, at the same time provide us with the only little disadvantage that can be raised against its use—namely, that on account of its powdery nature the completed drawing is not secure from effacement until a fixative has been applied to it.

That the names of those one can recall as distinguished wielders of the charcoal stick may be told off on the fingers of one's hand, remains a surprising fact. In France a master of the art, and perhaps its most loyal and devoted exponent, is to be found in M. Léon Lhermitte, who is renowned for his representations of peasant life and rural landscape. Here, in England, among those of others less proficient or less persistent in

CHARCOAL DRAWING

their wooing, the names of the late T. B. Hardy, the brilliant painter of sea-pieces in water-colour, and of Mr. Mura at once come to mind. On a pinnacle with these should now be placed that of Mr. Frank Wasley, whose work is the subject of the present sketch, for his work is distinguished by a verve and a vigour that are truly remarkable.

It was not until his return, in 1875, from a four years' tour in Canada that he seriously determined to woo the sister art. His early love of music has apparently never forsaken him, and appears to have helped make Mr. Wasley's work what it is. The two arts run on very parallel lines, and although there are possibly few artists who have been trained as professional



SHIPPING IN A CALM
BY FRANK WASLEY

From the Collection of Mr. Charles Emanuel

Mr. Wasley was born at Peckham in 1854. His was a case of the spontaneous kindling of the flame of art, for he assures me that no other members of his family had evinced tendencies in the same direction. His early youth, passed as it was in the country, enabled him to revel in long solitary rambles whereon he could rejoice in the pageant of Nature's ever-changing moods, and store up their memory in an impressionable and receptive brain, there to be edited, and thence given forth later for the joy of others.

However, Mr. Wasley was not destined to go straight to his mark, for he was trained as a musician, and entered the ranks of that profession.

musicians, yet the artist who is not a keen lover of music may be considered a rarity.

Mr. Wasley never had any tuition in art beyond what Nature taught him, and Nature touched the same chords in him as she had touched so tunefully in Turner and Constable and Cox. It is evident that he is as enchanted with the poetic grandeur of Turner as with the breadth and freedom of Constable and Cox. They expressed the same feelings as he feels within himself, and it is evident that he was wise enough as a young man to learn from them how best to give vent to his own vigorous and individual sentiments.

FRANK WASLEY

We may imagine the joy the young Wasley of twenty years ago evinced when his first exhibited picture, *Evening on the Esk*, found a ready purchaser at the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, as well for itself as for a replica. Since that date he has exhibited works in black and white and in colour at the Royal Academy, and at Leeds, Exeter, and other provincial galleries.

The writer well remembers the thrill of pleasure with which he first espied what proved to be one of Wasley's charcoal drawings. It was at a picture auction, and the drawing gleamed forth from the midst of a medley of mediocre work. The signature was illegible, but no signature was necessary to proclaim its merits as a work of art. The identity of 'the new charcoal man' remained a mystery until a



THE FRESHENING BREEZE
BY FRANK WASLEY

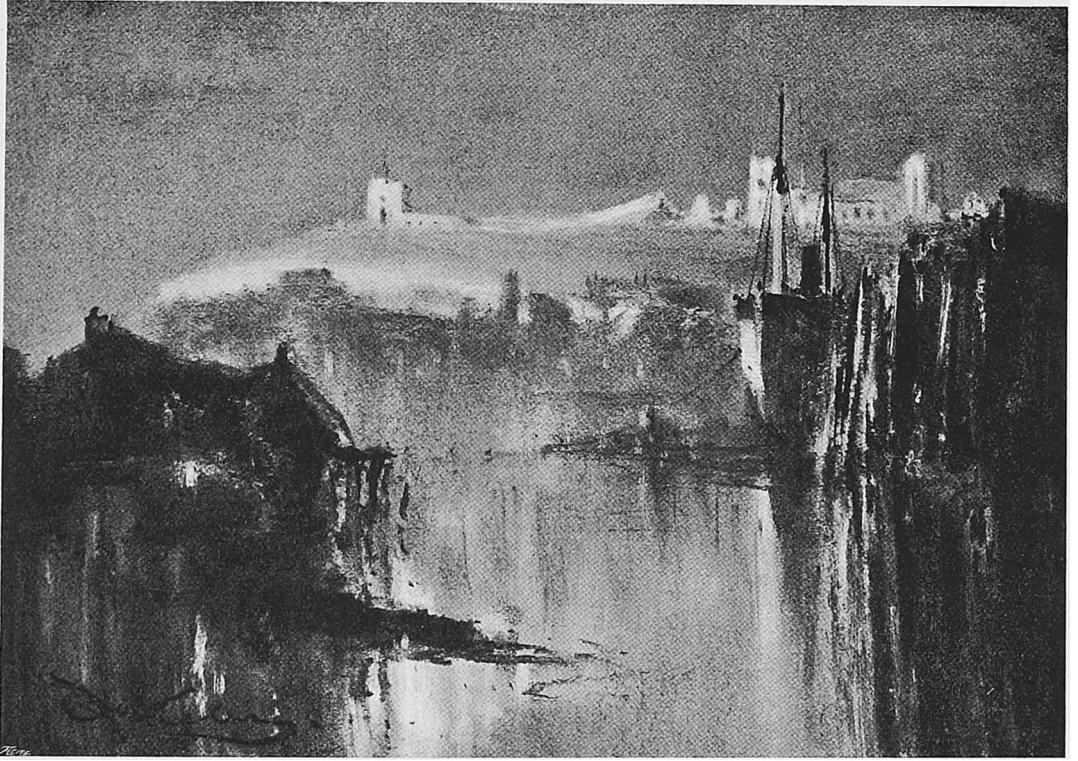
From the Collection of Mr. Charles Emanuel.

It was not until about 1894 that Mr. Wasley made his first attempts at work in charcoal, and at once found that it was the medium which exactly suited his peculiar temperament. Impressionable in the extreme, given to sudden and fleeting inspirations, our artist found paints and brushes slow of preparation and use compared to the handy sheet of paper and stick of charcoal. So that, although Mr. Wasley works with distinction in water-colours and other mediums, it is evident that charcoal is his favourite, and the one that gives the clearest reflection of the poetic and sentimental phases of his mind.

mutual acquaintance, seeing the work, at once recognised the signature. Since that date it has been my pleasure to see a large number of Mr. Wasley's drawings. Most of them have been inspired by the wealth of landscape and seascape to be found in the vicinity of the dear old seaport of Whitby in Yorkshire. Mr. Wasley's studio is at Wellclose Square in that town.

His drawings are boldly conceived and carried out on a large scale. They invariably suggest in a remarkable manner the rich colour present at those dramatic moments he generally chooses to depict. If it be a calm he portrays, it will be

HIS METHOD



WHITBY FROM THE RIVER AT SUNDOWN
BY FRANK WASLEY

a calm either all gold and blue in the swelter of a summer's mid-day, or it will be the revelry of orange and crimson and purple of some glorious sunset. On the other hand, Mr. Wasley is particularly impressive in his representations of the crash and thunder of storms. Looking at his stormy scenes, we are awed by the ominous oppressiveness of his lowering clouds; he makes us feel the sting of biting sleet and the icy coldness of the driving spray. A sense of the deathly stillness of his snow-bound landscapes pervades us, and he carries us with him into the desperate turmoil and uproar of the hurricane at sea. To stir one's emotions and convey so much with a mere stick of burnt twig betokens an artist of no mean order.

Knowing many of the spots portrayed, I may safely say that Mr. Wasley gets a fine grasp of the essentials of a scene, and hits on just the interesting moment when Nature robes them in her finest costumes. His technique is singularly free from monotony, and an added interest is lent to his drawings by the evidently varied treatment of the medium in the rendering of the

different textures and surfaces depicted. His composition is almost invariably excellent.

If a fault may be found with some of these charcoal drawings, it is that in his feverish enthusiasm to transmit the impression he has received to paper, the artist has allowed certain disagreeable evidences of hurry to remain in the completed drawing.

Following is a description of the method Mr. Wasley employs, as kindly conveyed to us by himself. 'Where an effect is desired, either storm, repose, light, or shade, I rough in my darks, never sparing my medium—plenty of it on the paper. With the hand and ball of the thumb I work up the masses. With the exception of a leather stump and crumb of bread, nothing further is required'—unless, let us add, it be Mr. Wasley himself.

If we pass in review the finest examples of his work, 'Entering Tynemouth' is a scene typical of the stormy port on the north-eastern coast, depicted on one of those blustering, boisterous days, when the gloomy shadows of great masses of hurrying, heavily-charged



WAITING FOR THE TIDE
BY FRANK WASLEY

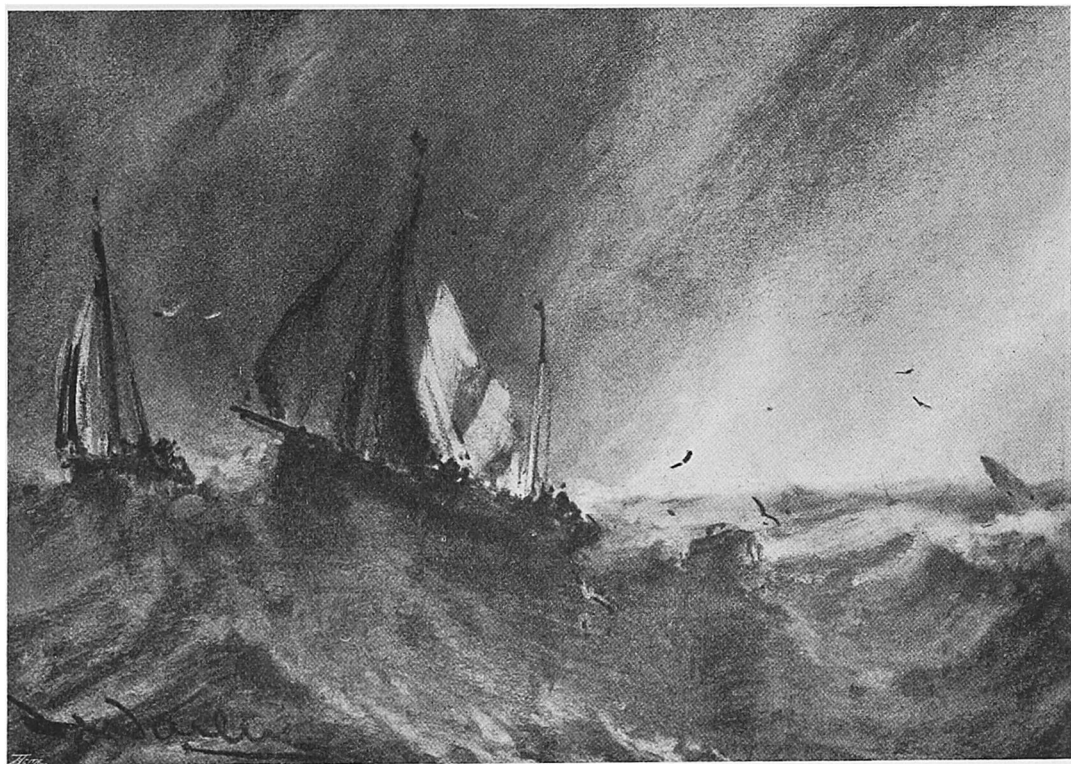
rain-clouds alternate with brilliant gleams of fitful sunshine. 'Whitby Abbey' is a poetic rendering of the grand old ruined fane seen in a mysterious light standing beside the pond at the cliff's edge, the waters reflecting weirdly the gaunt yet graceful pile.

'Whitby from the River at Sundown' recalls most vividly one of those sunsets for which Whitby is so famed, when all the clambering red-tiled town is bathed in a gorgeous crimson glow. This swan-song of a day is solemn in its still beauty. One of the great local tramp steamers is left stranded on the mud, while the Esk ebbs away down to the sea, 'neath the ruddy town and the majestic grey stone piers.

'Waiting for the Tide' is a large airy coast scene, somewhat reminiscent of Bonington. 'At Glaisdale' is a fine example of Mr. Wasley's virile manner of dealing with landscape subjects, and gives us in a strikingly convincing way the aspect of a wind-swept, rain-sodden Yorkshire road at sunset time. We seem to feel the cold damp blast of the moisture-laden air on our cheeks, and to have a presage of the wild night that is to come, with its

intense darkness, its rattling window frames, and the howling and shrieking of the demon wind. 'Shipping in a Calm' shows us a busy harbour scene, with the sails on the tall ships hanging listlessly in the oppressive stillness. Everything is reflected into the glowing waters, and the whole scene vibrates with heat and light. This drawing is as 'fat' as a nice 'juicy' oil-painting. A somewhat similar scene, but suggestive of even greater brilliancy of colour, is the 'Shipping at Sunset,' wherein a crowd of vessels, large and small, seem to be floating in on of those glorious revels of rich colouring to be found on the canvases of Ziem.

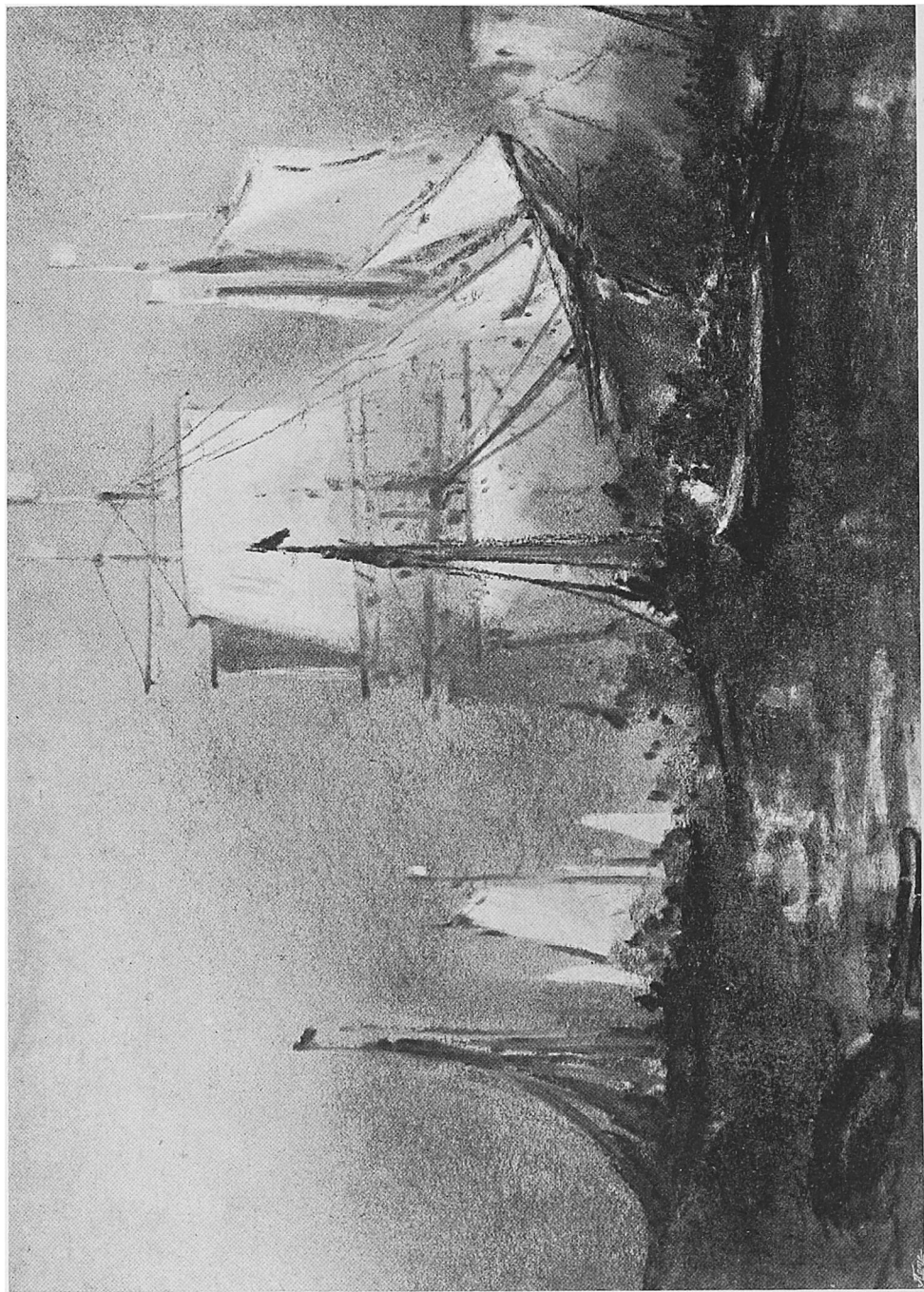
'The Squall' is a fine composition of trawlers in a heavy sea, lashed to fury by a wind that is tearing the clouds into flying shreds. Sea-gulls are wheeling about and pouncing down on their prey; the whole picture is full of motion. Even more impressive is 'Alone on the Waters,' wherein we see a weather-worn fishing smack toiling along under a mere shred of canvas through a weary waste of angry seas, a lurid sky the while attempting still further to overawe the brave hearts on board.



THE SQUALL
BY FRANK WASLEY



WHITBY ABBEY
BY FRANK WASLEY



SHIPPING, AT SUNSET
BY FRANK WASLEY

From the Collection of M. Charles Emanuel